

# The Impact of Cultural Integration on English Reading Comprehension Ability

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**Abstract:** In the context of globalization, English serves as a primary tool for international communication, making the cultivation of English reading comprehension skills particularly crucial. Cultural integration, as a teaching strategy that incorporates the target language culture into the teaching process, effectively enhances students' English reading comprehension abilities. This study explores the impact of cultural integration on English reading comprehension ability, aiming to uncover mechanisms related to cultural background knowledge, reading interests and motivation, and reading strategies. The study finds that cultural integration significantly optimizes English reading teaching and proposes specific measures such as designing culturally integrated reading materials, conducting diverse teaching activities, and fostering teachers' cross-cultural teaching abilities. These measures provide new insights and practical paths for English teaching.

**Keywords:** Cultural integration; English reading comprehension; Reading interest; Reading strategies; Teaching optimization

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## 1. Introduction

In modern society, English reading comprehension ability has become a crucial indicator of English proficiency. Traditional English reading teaching methods often focus on imparting language knowledge and reading skills, neglecting the influence of cultural background. Cultural integration, as an innovative teaching strategy, integrates the target language culture into the classroom, enhancing students' cultural background knowledge, stimulating their reading interests and motivation, optimizing reading strategies, and comprehensively improving their reading comprehension abilities. This study not only enriches teaching theory but also provides actionable strategies for practical teaching.

## 2. Theoretical basis of cultural integration on English reading comprehension ability

### 2.1. Definition and essence of cultural integration

Cultural integration refers to a teaching strategy in language education that incorporates elements of the target language culture to help learners better understand and use the language. At its core, cultural integration

permeates through cultural background knowledge, enabling students to comprehend and master the cultural implications behind the language they are learning. This approach not only enhances students' language proficiency but also strengthens their cross-cultural communication abilities, thereby comprehensively improving their overall competence <sup>[1]</sup>.

The essence of cultural integration extends beyond the transmission of language and cultural knowledge, emphasizing a deep integration of culture with language learning <sup>[1]</sup>. This integration encompasses language expressions, cultural customs, thinking patterns, and various other aspects. Through cultural integration, students engage in language learning within authentic cultural contexts, making language acquisition more vivid and meaningful. Moreover, cultural integration stimulates students' interests and motivation for learning, enhancing their learning outcomes.

## **2.2. Constituent elements of English reading comprehension ability**

English reading comprehension ability refers to learners' capacity to understand and process information from English texts during reading. Its constituent elements primarily include vocabulary and grammar knowledge, reading strategies and techniques, background knowledge, and cultural understanding. Firstly, vocabulary and grammar knowledge form the foundation of reading comprehension. Sufficient vocabulary and solid grammar knowledge enable learners to accurately grasp the content and structure of texts.

Secondly, reading strategies and techniques play a crucial role in the process of reading comprehension. These strategies encompass prediction, summarization, inference, analysis, and others. By employing effective reading strategies, learners can enhance reading efficiency and comprehension depth. Background knowledge and cultural understanding constitute deeper factors in reading comprehension. Enriched background knowledge and cultural understanding assist learners in better comprehending implicit information and cultural nuances within texts.

## **2.3. Theoretical relationship between cultural integration and English reading comprehension**

Cultural integration and English reading comprehension are closely interconnected in theory. Firstly, the introduction of cultural background knowledge significantly enhances students' reading comprehension ability. Research indicates that cultural background knowledge helps students better understand implicit meanings and cultural information within texts, thereby improving their reading comprehension levels. Through cultural integration, students integrate language learning with cultural understanding during the reading process, forming a more comprehensive cognitive framework.

Secondly, cultural integration can stimulate students' reading interests and motivation, thereby enhancing their reading effectiveness. When students develop an interest in the target language culture, they become more actively engaged in reading activities and gain a deeper understanding of cultural information through reading. This positive learning attitude not only aids in improving reading comprehension ability but also enhances students' motivation for language learning, creating a beneficial learning cycle <sup>[2]</sup>.

## **3. Impact of cultural integration on English reading comprehension ability**

### **3.1. Promotional role of cultural background knowledge in reading comprehension**

Cultural background knowledge refers to readers' understanding of the target language culture, customs, history, and societal context, which plays a crucial role in the process of reading comprehension. The richness of cultural background knowledge directly influences the depth and accuracy of readers' understanding of

textual content. Through cultural integration, students can integrate cultural background knowledge with textual content during reading, thereby comprehensively understanding the implicit meanings and deeper connotations of texts. For instance, students with relevant cultural background knowledge can better comprehend background information in texts related to historical events or cultural customs and understand the authors' intentions.

Cultural background knowledge not only helps students understand the surface information of texts but also aids them in interpreting metaphors and cultural implications within texts. Many English reading materials contain numerous cultural metaphors and symbols, which can lead to misunderstandings if students lack cultural background knowledge. Through cultural integration, students can better grasp these metaphors and symbols, thereby enhancing their reading comprehension ability. For example, understanding the concept of the "American Dream" in American culture helps students better comprehend the theme of the "American Dream" in *The Great Gatsby*.

Additionally, cultural background knowledge enhances students' emotional resonance with textual content. Understanding the cultural background and the author's cultural perspective helps students better grasp the emotional tone and depth of the text. This emotional resonance not only improves reading comprehension effectiveness but also enhances students' interest and sense of identification with English culture, thereby stimulating their motivation and engagement in learning.

### **3.2. Influence of cultural integration on reading interest and motivation**

Cultural integration significantly enhances students' reading interest and motivation. By incorporating cultural elements of the target language, teachers can make reading materials more vivid and interesting, capturing students' attention. For example, integrating English-speaking countries' holiday customs, historical stories, biographies of famous figures, etc., into reading instruction can stimulate students' curiosity and desire for knowledge, thereby enhancing their interest in reading. When students develop an interest in reading materials, they become more actively engaged in the reading process, consequently improving their reading outcomes.

High levels of reading interest and motivation are reflected not only in students' participation but also in their attitudes and habits toward reading. Cultural integration helps students develop positive attitudes toward reading, viewing it as an enjoyable exploration rather than just a task. Through cultural integration, students experience the charm of the target language culture during reading, cultivating their reading habits and interests. For example, by reading classic literature and cultural stories from English-speaking countries, students can experience the rich cultural content and stimulate their interest and desire for exploration.

Moreover, cultural integration enhances students' intrinsic motivation for learning. Intrinsic motivation refers to students' drive to learn out of interest and pursuit of knowledge, which is enduring and powerful. Through cultural integration, students perceive the unique charm of the target language culture during reading, thus fostering intrinsic motivation. This intrinsic motivation not only helps improve students' reading comprehension ability but also encourages them to sustain English reading and learning, forming a positive learning cycle.

### **3.3. Optimization role of cultural integration on reading strategies**

Cultural integration effectively optimizes students' reading strategies, enhancing their reading comprehension ability. Reading strategies refer to various methods and techniques readers use to improve comprehension during the reading process. Through cultural integration, students can learn and apply more effective reading strategies, thereby enhancing reading efficiency and depth of comprehension. For example, teachers can use cultural integration to teach students strategies such as prediction, summarization, inference, etc., making their

reading process more targeted and organized.

Firstly, cultural integration helps students better use prediction strategies. Prediction strategies involve predicting the content of upcoming readings based on existing cultural background knowledge and textual clues. This strategy helps students build expectations and frameworks for reading, thereby improving the coherence and comprehension effectiveness of their reading<sup>[3]</sup>. Through cultural integration, students can make reasonable predictions based on information such as customs and historical events in the target language culture, enhancing the coherence and accuracy of their reading comprehension.

Secondly, cultural integration helps students better use summarization and inference strategies. Summarization involves summarizing and extracting the main points of textual content during the reading process, while inference involves logical reasoning and judgment based on information in the text. Cultural integration provides rich cultural background information, enabling students to have more comprehensive grounds for summarization and inference. For example, by understanding social phenomena and historical events in a specific cultural context, students can more accurately summarize the themes and key points of articles and engage in logical reasoning.

Finally, cultural integration helps students establish more effective reading habits and methods. Through cultural integration, students learn how to use cultural background knowledge and reading strategies to improve reading efficiency and comprehension effectiveness. For example, by comparing and analyzing articles from different cultural backgrounds, students can learn how to interpret texts from cultural perspectives, developing their reading methods and habits, thereby enhancing their overall reading ability.

## **4. Measures to optimize English reading teaching through cultural integration**

### **4.1. Designing cultural integration reading materials**

Designing cultural integration reading materials is the primary step in optimizing English reading teaching. Such materials should incorporate the rich cultural backgrounds of the target language country, including history, geography, literature, arts, social customs, and more. By introducing these cultural elements, students not only enhance their language comprehension skills but also gain extensive cultural knowledge during the reading process. For example, materials could feature original literary works, news reports, film clips, and other authentic cultural materials to enhance students' sense of realism and closeness to the target language country. These materials should be carefully selected to ensure authenticity and diversity, avoiding cultural biases and stereotypes.

Moreover, cultural integration materials should emphasize diversity of content and relevance to students' daily lives. By selecting themes relevant to students' everyday lives such as food culture, campus life, technological developments, etc., cultural learning can be made meaningful<sup>[4]</sup>. For instance, describing daily life on American campuses allows students to learn the target language and culture within familiar contexts, thereby enhancing their learning interests and comprehension abilities. Designing such materials requires teachers to possess rich cultural knowledge and teaching experience, enabling accurate delivery of cultural information and helping students find enjoyment and accomplishment in their studies.

### **4.2. Conduct diverse cultural integration teaching activities**

Diverse cultural integration teaching activities are essential for enhancing students' cultural understanding and reading abilities. These activities should encompass various forms both inside and outside the classroom, including systematic classroom teaching and enriching extracurricular practices. For example, in-class activities could involve cultural lectures, video presentations, cultural discussions, etc., guiding students to understand and discuss the target language culture. Outside class, teachers can organize cultural experiential activities

such as museum visits, foreign film screenings, participation in cultural festivals, etc., allowing students to experience and learn in real cultural contexts. These highly interactive and participatory activities stimulate students' learning interests and strengthen their cultural identity.

Cultural integration teaching activities should emphasize interactivity and participation, encouraging students to actively engage and express themselves. For instance, teachers can organize role-plays and simulated scenario activities where students experience different cultural perspectives and ways of thinking through role-playing characters from the target language country. Through such interactive activities, students not only enhance their language expression skills but also deepen their understanding and identification with the target language culture. Additionally, teachers can facilitate group discussions and cooperative learning, enabling students to share cultural knowledge and learning experiences, fostering their teamwork and cross-cultural communication skills. These activities should be tailored to students' interests and needs, continuously adjusted, and updated to maintain relevance and timeliness in cultural learning.

### **4.3. Cultivate teachers' cross-cultural teaching abilities**

Teachers' cross-cultural teaching abilities are crucial for the success of cultural integration teaching. Firstly, teachers should possess solid knowledge of the target language culture and cross-cultural communication skills. They need to not only understand basic cultural knowledge of the target language country but also deeply comprehend its cultural connotations and diversity. Through continuous learning and improvement, teachers can accurately convey cultural information in teaching, helping students better understand and apply it. For example, teachers can enrich their cultural knowledge and teaching experience through international exchanges, further studies, cultural research, etc., ensuring they confidently deliver cultural content in the classroom and help students progress in cultural learning.

Secondly, teachers should have the ability to flexibly apply cultural integration strategies. Cultural integration requires not only rich cultural content but also effective teaching strategies and methods. Teachers should flexibly apply different cultural integration strategies based on students' actual situations and teaching objectives, such as cultural comparisons, cultural experiences, cultural discussions, etc. <sup>[5]</sup>. Through diversified teaching strategies, teachers can effectively stimulate students' learning interests, enhance their cultural understanding, and improve their reading abilities. For example, teachers can use comparative analysis in the classroom to guide students in comparing differences between Western and Eastern cultures, helping them deepen their understanding of the target language culture. These strategies require teachers to have strong teaching design and implementation capabilities, enabling flexible adjustments based on teaching needs.

### **4.4. Utilize multimedia and information technology to facilitate cultural integration**

Multimedia and information technology provide rich resources and means for cultural integration. Firstly, teachers can use multimedia technology to display diverse cultural materials such as images, audio, videos, etc., making cultural integration more vivid and tangible. By watching films, documentaries, music videos, etc., students can visually experience the appearance and atmosphere of different cultures, deepening their understanding of cultural background knowledge. For example, teachers can play videos in class about the celebration of American Independence Day, helping students understand the historical background and cultural significance of this holiday. These multimedia resources should be carefully selected and arranged to ensure their educational effectiveness and cultural value.

Secondly, information technology offers interactive and personalized learning possibilities for cultural integration. Teachers can use online resources and platforms to provide students with rich cultural learning

materials and interactive learning opportunities. For example, teachers can recommend students to visit news websites, cultural blogs, online museums, etc., of the target language country to access the latest cultural information and trends. Through online discussion and communication platforms, students can interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds, sharing cultural viewpoints and learning experiences, and enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills. Additionally, teachers can use educational technology tools to design and implement diverse cultural integration activities such as online quizzes, virtual reality, interactive games, etc., making cultural learning more enjoyable and challenging.

#### **4.5. Establishing an effective cultural integration assessment system**

Establishing an effective cultural integration assessment system is a crucial aspect of ensuring the quality of cultural integration teaching. Firstly, the assessment system should cover multiple dimensions including cultural knowledge, cultural attitudes, and cross-cultural communication abilities. Assessment of cultural knowledge can be conducted through written tests, oral examinations, project reports, etc., assessing students' mastery of cultural background knowledge of the target language. Evaluation of cultural attitudes can be conducted through questionnaires, classroom observations, student self-assessments, etc., to understand students' interests, attitudes, and sense of identity towards the target language culture. Assessment of cross-cultural communication abilities can be conducted through role-plays, simulated scenarios, oral presentations, etc., to evaluate students' performance and abilities in cross-cultural communication. These assessment methods should be used comprehensively to fully understand students' cultural learning effectiveness.

Secondly, the assessment system should emphasize the combination of formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment focuses on students' performance and progress during cultural integration learning, tracking and recording their learning attitudes, participation, and development<sup>[6]</sup>. For example, teachers can monitor students' learning progress and issues through daily classroom observations, homework feedback, group discussion records, etc. The summative assessment focuses on students' comprehensive performance at specific stages of learning, evaluating their cultural learning outcomes and proficiency levels through final exams, project presentations, learning reports, etc. This comprehensive assessment approach can fully reflect students' learning conditions, contributing to teaching improvement and optimization.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study explores the positive role of cultural integration in enhancing English reading comprehension abilities. Specifically, it manifests in the promotion of reading comprehension through enriched cultural background knowledge, enhancing students' reading interest and motivation, and optimizing their reading strategies. Cultural integration not only enhances students' understanding of reading materials but also improves their cross-cultural communication abilities, thereby providing a new pathway for comprehensively enhancing the quality of English reading teaching.

Future research directions could expand the scope and subjects of study to further validate the effectiveness of cultural integration on students of different ages and English proficiency levels. Interdisciplinary studies could explore the application of cultural integration in comprehensive quality education. Continuous tracking of the long-term effects of cultural integration on English learning and evaluating its sustainability and effectiveness in practical teaching are also suggested. Through ongoing in-depth research, we hope to provide more scientific and effective guidance for English reading teaching, promoting comprehensive development in English education.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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